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Comments: I am writing to ask the USFS to re-evaluate the proposed guidelines for fixed climbing anchors in Wilderness areas.

Fixed anchors are absolutely essential to climbers' safety and not "prohibited installations" under the Wilderness Act. The Wilderness Act's language is meant to forbid infrastructure such as roads, telephone poles, electrical transmission lines, bridges, etc. which have a significant impact on the character and nature of the wilderness. Fixed rock climbing anchors - typically stainless steel, no more than a couple of square inches in area, and lasting many decades - have essentially zero impact on flora, fauna, and non-climbing visitors to the wilderness, as they are invisible from a distance of more than a hundred feet or so. I do not believe they fall under the umbrella of "prohibited installations" defined in the Act, in the way that roads, transmission lines, or other infrastructure do. In fact, a simple hiking trail in wilderness is orders of magnitude more impactful to flora, fauna, and the character of the Wilderness (by increasing human visitation) than rock climbing anchors.

The USFS has successfully worked with rock climbing groups across the USA for decades to authorize and manage fixed anchor installation. It is unreasonable to upend this precedent to effectively prohibit new anchor installation and put in jeopardy the decades of safe Wilderness exploration they have enabled. The Wilderness Act was created in order to enable Americans to explore the last preserved, natural places in our country - however, this new proposal would do the opposite and restrict citizens from utilizing our wilderness resources in a sustainable, responsible, and respectful way.

In addition, restricting the establishment of new routes to "existing climbing opportunities" on non-Wilderness lands is unenforceable and will create confusion amongst land managers and climbers. Non-Wilderness climbing management policy should maintain opportunities for new anchors unless and until analyses determine climbing should be restricted to protect cultural and natural resources.

I strongly encourage the USFS to re-evaluate the proposed rules.